

critical digest

139 East 47 St. NY 17 NY
EL 5-6894 T. M. Kraus



Oct 31, 1956 Vol IX No 5. The Weekly NYC Theatre Newsletter \$25 year, \$6.50 quarter

This Week

Auntie Mame-Broadhurst 10/31. Fryer & Carr present Lawrence & Lee adaption of Patrick Dennis best-seller. With Rosalind Russell.

The Sleeping Prince-Coronet 11/1. Gilbert Miller presents Terence Rattigan play with Michael Redgrave.

Diary of A Scoundrel-Phoenix 11/4. Hambleton & Houghton present 19th century farce by Ostrovski. With Roddy McDowell.

Shoestring '57-Barbizon Plaza 11/5. Ben Bagley presents revue with John Bartis, Fay De Witt, Dody Goodman.

Next Week

Long Day's Journey Into Night-Hayes 11/7.

Teahouse of August Moon-11/7.

Child of Fortune-Royale -11/13.

A Very Special Baby 11/14.

Digests of Current NYC Theatre Reviews

Separate Tables-Music Box 10/25. 7 pro votes for double bill by Terence Rattigan presented by Producers Theatre and 7 rave notices for co-stars Eric Portman and Margaret Leighton. Particularly fine play wonderfully well acted, summed up Atkinson, Times. Prize package, sheer theatrically fascinating, added Kerr, Herald Tribune. Chapman, News, gave more credit to fine trick acting by two stars than the two neat playlets. McClain, Journal American, didn't enjoy the first act and thought author could have cut it. Brilliant tour de force for London stars reported Watts, Post, who agreed with Times that plays are best Rattigan has yet written.

Best House in Naples-Lyceum 10/26-10/27. 7 con votes and 3 performances complete record for Italian comedy adapted by F. Hugh Herbert and presented by Nick Mayo. Being in bad taste and being very unfunny were two major charges. As pointless a comedy as Broadway has put on in the last fortnight, stated Times aisle-sitter. Watts, Post, wondered if translation was bad or if Italian theatre is in bad state. Katy Jurado made brief NY stage debut in it.

The Sea-Gull- 4th St 10/22. 5 pro votes and 2 con votes by Times and Herald Tribune greeted David Ross revival of Russian classic featuring Betty Field and Shepard Strudwick. Outright raves for the Off-Broadway production filed by McHarry, News, Coleman, Mirror, and Watts, Post. The acting has the virtue of not failing in its finer scenes, Post appraiser applauded. Mild pros added by McClain, Journal American, and Donnelly, World-Telegram & Sun. Former enjoyed Uncle Vanya more, latter thought two younger players Bryarly Lee and William Smithers came off to better advantage than others. Con vote listed by Times because it lacks undertones and firmness of characterization, while Herald Tribune blamed wavering direction of difficult play by Ross. Some thought Betty Field miscast.

The first 70 cent tickets for high school students will be available in two weeks. The plan of the NYC Board of Education and the League of NY Theatres will provide 25 sets in the balcony per performance to be set aside for the program. Schools will be notified for participation in alphabetical order and priority will be given seniors during the early stages of the program.

Plays

Best House in Naples closed after three performances... Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter closes Nov 10... Pictures in the Hallway performances planned for week-ends at Playhouse called off due to film chores of Aline MacMahon... Catch a Falling Star formerly entitled "A Palm Tree in a Rose Garden" to star Miraim Hopkins... The Happiest Millionaire to open at Lyceum Nov 26.

Players

Sammy Davis, Jr. illness kept Mr. Wonderful closed for 4 performances, Kay Medford was also hospitalized during this period... 1% wage increase given to Actors Equity under cost-of-living contract with League of NY Theatres... Fritz Weaver joined Protective Custody... Lorne Greene to star in Speaking of Murder... Dolores Gray to star in But Not For Marriage... Elizabeth Montgomery replaced Peggy Maurer in Loud Red Patrick... Gwen Verdon to play role of Anna Christie in New Girl in Town... David Warfield who died in 1951 left \$5 1/2 millions to 3 religious charities for actors... "Equity and the Alien Actor" will be discussed at Drama Desk Nov 5.

Theatre Ad Notes

The Apple Cart producers welcomed Major Barbara producers in Times ad... Inherit the Wind producer Herman Shumlin heralded Ed Begley in open letter.

Summer Theatres

Colonie Musical Tent Theatre to open next season on Route 9 between Albany, NY and Saratoga Springs, NY by Eddie Rich.

Other Broadways

My Fair Lady national company headed by Brian Aherne to open Mar 18 in Rochester, NY playing 10 weeks in Los Angeles and 5 weeks in San Francisco.

College Drama

The Time of Your Life to be presented by Hunter College Campus Theatre Nov 2-3 at Little Theatre, Bedford Park Blvd and Goulden Av, Bronx.

TV & Radio Theatre Notes

Pal Joey on NBC Jan 7 to star Jose Ferrer... Hal March to star with Nanette Fabray in High Button Shoes Nov 24 on NBC... Victor Borge Show to be seen on CBS Dec 11... Leon Pearson to present weekly comment on books and theatre on WRCA-TV, NY... Gracie Fields to be seen on BBC-TV Nov 4 in Old Lady Shows her Medals, same Barrie play she will be seen in on CBS-TV in December.

Theatre Film Notes

Hecht & Lancaster to film Separate Tables in France next summer... Diary of Anne Frank to be filmed by 20th Century Fox.

Vaudeville Notes

Judy Garland run at Palace extended into January... Ann Gilbert, Danny Carroll and The Foursome head new revue at Radio City Music Hall starting Nov 1.

Theatre Book Notes

"The Great Folio of 1622" by John Shroder published by Shoestring Press, Hamden, Conn... New edition of "Pictorial History of American Theatre" by Daniel Blum published by Greenberg.



OFF
BROADWAY

Johnny Johnson to close Nov 4... Constance Dix and James Gibson replace Madeleine Morka and Sy Travers in Arms and Man... William Gyimes and A. Woursel will present Ibsen's The Lady from the Sea at Tempo Playhouse Nov 27... Misanthrope postponed opening at Theatre East to Nov 12.

Children of the Ladybug by Robert Thom will be presented at YMHA Nov 18... Musical version of Volpone with Alfred Ryder and Howard da Silva due at Rooftop Theatre Dec 10... Titus Andronicus will be presented by Shakespeare Theatre Workshop Nov 21... Shakespearewrights opened at 264 W 87 with a "public assembly permit" with Hamlet, several days after proposed opening halted by License Commission.

Johnny Johnson at Carnegie Playhouse drew split notices on revival of Kurt Weill musical. Times, Post and Variety aisle-sitters enjoyed it, while Herald Tribune, World Telegram-Sun appraisers panned it for diverse reasons. Gelb, Times, found it quite effective when it wasn't working on its thesis too hard. Herridge, Post, thought all scenes were directed with rich inventiveness by Stella Adler. Herald Tribune panned book, cast and dancing, while Donnelly, World Telegram & Sun, thought entire proceeding amateur.

Hamlet presented by Shakespeare-rights approved by Gelb, Times, Beckley, Herald Tribune, and Kerner, Women's Wear. Taut and swiftly paced, okay-ed Times man, Philip Lawrence as the title character was recommended to the Stratford, Conn, Shakespeare Festival by Gelb.

THEATRE
TV COMMENT



Born Yesterday production on NBC-TV Hall of Fame with Mary Martin and Paul Douglas was praised only by Gross, News, of daily NY-TV reviewers. Gould, Times, Crosby, Herald Tribune, and O'Brian, Journal American, all thought Martin badly miscast in role originated by Judy Holliday.

THEATRE
BOOK
COMMENTS



"Thursday's Child" by Eartha Kitt (Duell, Sloan & Pearce) was, vetoed by Rob, Variety, as magazine type reporting on a minor level. Trade-paper mugg will wait until star submits a much more satisfactory personal story.

OUT OF TOWN
THEATRE



Philadelphia tryouts include--Happy Hunting, Lil Abner, and Girls of Summer... Boston Tryouts include---Candide, A Very Special Baby and Bells Are Ringing... New Haven tryout is Long Day's Journey Into Night... Washington host to tryout of Child of Fortune... The Happiest Millionaire tryout at Cleveland.





GREEN
ROOM
DEPARTMENT

LEARNING TO ACT.... Actors were advised by producer Kermit Bloomgarden to use their judgement in picking the proper dramatic school. He told an ANTA sponsored forum at YMCA Sloane House that actors should not take a certain kind of training if it doesn't fit the person, reports Allen, Herald Tribune. . . Rather than spending money on acting schools, Sylvester, News, advised thespians to attend Separate Tables to study the two great acting performances by Margaret Leighton and Eric Portman. Actors Equity should pass a rule forcing all the busy young beauties and inarticulate muscle men who are US stage heroes and heroines to go to the Music Box at least twice.

DRAMA MAIL-BOX.... Not more than 40 attended the funeral of Owen Davis, sadly notes Philip Watson in Variety letter. . . 4 Times readers came to defense of Too Late the Phalarope, one feeling that rapt attention of first night audience should have been recorded in critic's review. . . TV's snipping of "objectionable" words from Shakespeare, Shaw and other theatre classics is an insult to listeners, pans a C. D. subscriber.

COLUMN TIP.... Aldous Huxley in NY to write stage version of his own novel "The Genius and the Goddess" checked Gardner, Herald Tribune. . . Who is the most polite NYC legit box-office man, asks O'Connor, Journal American.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS.... Carefully contrived method of capturing the audience's attention in Reluctant Debutante by having the leads look everywhere but each other is a brilliant stage trick, applauds McClain, Journal American. . . Big names make for big box-office, Coleman, Mirror, notes in recording the \$2 million advance for Ethel Merman in Happy Hunting. . . Maurice Evans is the perfect interpreter of Shaw and his performance in The Apple Cart is a glittering one even when the comedy does not glitter too brightly, second guesses Chapman, News.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES.... Signe Hasso, The Apple Cart, admitted that she don't like to go to the theatre because she can't sit still for two or three hours. She also told Fields, Mirror, that after a while in a theatre seat her back starts to ache. . . The author of the novel Auntie Mame uses pseudonyms because he likes privacy. His actual name, Peper, World -Telegram-Sun discovered is Edward Everett Tanner, but the best seller was written under the name Patrick Dennis. He also writes novels using the name Virginia Rowans. . . Terence Rattigan, author of Separate Tables, writes his plays for a mythical "Aunt Edna", he told McClain, Journal American. If the scripts please this average middle-class, disengaged, intelligent woman, he feels they cannot fail.

BENEFIT REGULATIONS.... Stiffer rules on theatre party operations will be adopted by NYC License Commission predicts Variety. The new rules will attempt to halt tickets assigned to charities going to other sources by making the sponsoring groups sign contracts to this effect.



" PROS & CONS BY T.M.K. "

Separate Rooms is an expertly staged, brilliantly cast, intelligently written slice of British drama perfectly adapted for US theatre tastes. The fact that the co-stars bring off their acting trick of portraying two different characters so successfully is only one reason for the total enjoyment of the fine evening of theatre. Peter Glenville as director rates top credits for assembling such a perfect cast of English character actors.

* * *

Romeo and Juliet presentation by Old Vic gives New Yorkers a chance to see and hear a fine repertory company of Shakespearean troupers. Though this particular production is never as exciting as the Bard's drama can be, it is nevertheless always an interesting and intelligent production. The repertory system which permits players to work together and in many different parts provides the audience with a unity often not apparent in US revivals of Shakespeare plays.

* * *

The Sea Gull has always seemed to this observer a play which deserves to be read, not produced. Current 4th St revival is not lively or brisk enough to change this prejudice. One fault might be out-of-date translation used. Play still seems like a long Chekhov monologue on life and especially death.

* * *

Air-conditioning systems turned off help no one. English actors seem akin to the US breed in the point of demanding the noisy systems be turned off after the first few minutes of each act.

* * *

Kermit Bloomgarden who single handedly sponsored the plan whereby NYC high school students will be able to buy 70 cent tickets to NYC legit shows deserves the cheers of everyone interested in theatre, present and future. Last season he provided 9000 such seats to his two hits- The Lark and Diary of Anne Frank. Now he has persuaded the League of NY Theatre members to follow his example. The theatre industry should provide some form of recognition for Bloomgarden's work in building audiences for tomorrow's theatre.

* * *

Signe Hasso, an actress known for her talents, beauty and frankness, told an interviewer this week that she personally can't stand going to the theatre because her back hurts after 2 or 3 hours sitting in a theatre seat. The lady has a point and every theatre-goer will admit it. Unlike most problems in the theatre, this one is a cinch. When it comes to the point that one of the top actresses starts complaining about the bad seats in most theatres, it is time for every theatre owner to check his cushions.

* * *

A "public assembly" permit has been granted the noble Shakespeare-rights so they could open Hamlet after being denied a theatre license. In the current Off-Broadway theatre a public assembly permit is a risky excuse. A new look at the theatre building code as it applies to Off-Broadway theatres is sorely needed.

* * *

London Theatre



Plays

Hotel Paradiso forced to close Nov 3 at Winter Garden due to Alec Guinness film job. Devil's Disciple with Tyrone Power due to open at Winter Garden Nov 8... A Likely Tale closes at Globe Nov 3 to be replaced by Nude with Violin Nov 7. Coward comedy features John Gielgud, Kathleen Harrison, Joyce Carey and David Horne... Double Image produced by Laurence Olivier will be presented at Savoy Nov 14 with Richard Attenborough, Shelia Sim, Zena Dare... Kismet closes Dec 1 at Stoll.

Players

Margaret Lockwood will return to cast of Spider Web for two suburban dates following Savoy run... Keith Green added to Nude with Violin cast.

Club Theatres

Success a new play by Molly Vennes to be presented at Interval Club Nov 4 with Alan Rye, Kitty Fitsberald... Arts Theatre will present 2 plays by Eugene Ionesco Nov 6, The New Tenant and The Bald Headed Prima Donna.

FOR STAGE STRUCK ONLY



* Keep fully informed of NYC theatre scene the easy way.

* Weekly newsletter digests all theatre news, comments, reviews, published in NYC press. Plus complete business, ticket data.

* \$25 year, \$6.50 quarter

CRITICAL DIGEST, 139 E 47, EL 5-6894

Old Vic in London

Much Ado About Nothing at Old Vic panned by Tynan, Observer as one of the Bard's plays never worth doing. Cast for most part is largely unblest by the good fairy of comedy, he noted. Barbara Jeffords and Keith Michell portrayed the leads in the Denis Carey production.

Old Vic in New York

Richard II opened the NY season of Old Vic at Winter Garden and drew a split press. Con notices were filed by reviewers of Tribune, News, and World-Telegram & Sun, while Times, Mirror, Post and Journal American hailed company. Atkinson, Times, billed group as finest Shakespeare troupe in NY in years. He especially enjoyed John Neville in the title role. Kerr, Herald Tribune, and Chapman, News, vetoed play for being on placid side.

Romeo and Juliet drew more favorable notices with only Watts, Post, and Donnelley, WT&S, filing con votes. Claire Bloom's Juliet won unanimous praise, but several critics felt John Neville's Romeo on the dull side. Atkinson, Times, also felt heavy scenery slowed down play.

Macbeth with Paul Rogers in title role and with Coral Browne as Lady Macbeth drew even better notices. Kerr, Herald Tribune, sole negative voter. All reviewers agreed that lively, bloody production was one of best NY had ever seen. Thrilling drama, summed up Times man. Chapman, News, approved play for fine performance of Lady Macbeth. While Herald Tribune dissenter feared that result is lively reading not the genuinely stirring tragedy hoped for.

Final play in NY repertory, Troilus and Cressida, will open Dec 26.

Oct 31, 1956. PLAYGOERS GUIDE chart of CRITICAL DIGEST, 195 E 47, NYC--EL 5-6894

This weekly chart of CRITICAL DIGEST, the weekly NYC theatre newsletter, presents up-to-minute data on current business and critical reception of all current Broadway and Off-Broadway shows. Subscribers to CRITICAL DIGEST may write or phone for any other specific data or for late reviews.

"C"-Critics-figures refer to percentage of PRO notices filed by NYC daily drama critics. PRO means show was recommended as entertaining and/or stimulating, not if critic predicted if show would be a hit.

"B"-Business-figures refer to percentage and gross ticket sales of last week and preceding weeks. "%"-figures refer to last week's attendance. "C"-figures refer to capacity of house. Figures that follow a gross estimate are preceded by "E" meaning preceding week's gross. All figures in bold type are those of the Theatre ("Cap \$41-\$14 \$16" means that capacity of house is \$41,000, last week's gross sales \$14, preceding week \$16,000, etc.)

APPLE CART Plymouth \$5.75 CI 6-9156	235 W 45	60% C- 3 Cons- Trib, News, J. Am Cap \$34	100% C- Unanimous praise for musical 100% B- Cap \$64--\$64 \$64 \$64 \$64
CAT HOT TIN ROOF Morosco \$6.90 CI 6-6230	217 W 45	90% C- 1 Con filed by Chapman, News 80% B- Cap \$31--\$25 \$25 \$25 \$21 \$21 \$23 \$22 \$21	100% C- Unanimous praise for soldier comedy 100% B- Cap \$38--\$38 \$38 \$38 \$38 \$38 \$38
DAMN YANKEE 46th St \$8.05 CI 6-4271	226 W 45	100% C- Unanimous approval musical & cast 100% B- Cap \$50--\$50 \$49 \$48 \$50 \$49 \$44	60% C-4 Prosi-News, Mirror, Jew Am, WT & S. 75% B- Cap \$38--\$28 \$28 \$27 \$30 \$26 \$22
DIARY A. FRANK Court \$5.75 CI 5-8 4289	138 W 48	100% C- Unanimous praise for Pulitzer Prize 100% B- Cap \$28--\$28 \$26 \$23 \$23 \$20 \$22	100% C- Unanimous praise for cast & musical 75% B- Cap \$32--\$43 \$43 \$38 \$33 \$38 \$32 \$29
FANNY Majestic \$7.50 CI 6-0730	245 W 44	50% C- 4 Cons- H. Trib, Mir, Post, J. Am 60% B- Cap \$62--\$45 \$44 \$40 \$35 \$38 \$31 \$33	90% C- 1 Con- Wor-Tele-Sun. 95% B- Cap \$27-- \$25
INHERIT WIND National \$5.75 FE 6-8220	208 W 41	90% C- Funks, Times, sole con vote 95% B- Cap \$31--\$28 \$31 \$27 \$26 \$28	100% C- Unanimous praise for English comedy Cap \$30
JUDY GARLAND Faience \$7.50 FL 7-2626	1564 Bway	100% C- Unanimous praises for Judy & Show. 100% B- Cap \$38--\$38 \$38 \$38 \$38	10% C- Kerr, H. Trib, sole pro --rest mild cons 85% B- Cap \$33--\$26
LOUIE BED PATRICK Ambassador \$4.60 CO 5-1855	282 W 49	30% C- 2 Pro- News, J. Am 90% B- Cap \$36--\$31 \$29	20% C- 2 Pros- J. Am, News. 40% B- Cap \$41--\$15 \$14 \$13 \$11 \$13 \$15
MATCHMAKER Royal \$5.75 CI 5-5760	250 W 45	90% C- Watts, Post, filed sole con vote 85% B- Cap \$31--\$25 \$21 \$18 \$19 \$14 \$18	Richard II- 3 Cons- Trib, News, WT & S Romeo- 2 Cons- Post, WT & S Macbeth 1 Cons- Trib.
MIDDLE NIGHT ANTA \$5.75 CI 6-8870	250 W 52	20% C- 2 Pro Play-Mir, J. Am- 100% Robinson 100% B- Cap \$39--\$39 \$38 \$36 \$26 \$21	10% C- Kerr, H. Trib 11 8 494 15 4 327 14 5 454 14 7 541 15 4 535 12 7 396
MR WONDERFUL Broadway \$7.50 CI 7-2887	1681 Bway	10% C- Chapman, News sole pro show-100% Davis 75% B- Cap \$71--\$55 \$49 \$54 \$41 \$43 \$43 \$43	Proa Cons Variety 55-56 54-55
MOST HAPPY FELLA Imperial \$7.50 CQ 5-2412	246 W 45	100% C- Unanimous raves for musical & cast 100% B- Cap \$38--\$38 \$38 \$38 \$38 \$38	Nov 12-Barraut & Renaud-Palace Nov 14- Double Image-Savoy Nov 15- Fanny- Drury Lane Dec 10- Country Wife-Royal Court Dec 17- Ticket of Leave- Arts

"RATINGS OF NYC CRITICS"

1956-57 season ratings of NYC drama critics on current Broadway Shows by Critical Digest. "%"-figures are percentage of pro votes in comparison to con votes on current season shows. Variety figures are percentages of favorable reviews written for entire past seasons.

	C. D. %	Proa	Cons	Variety 55-56	54-55
Atkinson, Times	70%	12	7	490	407
Kerr, H. Trib	65%	11	8	494	394
Chapman, News	85%	15	4	327	580
Goldman, Mirror	80%	14	5	454	566
Watts, Post	65%	12	7	541	426
McClai, J. Am	85%	15	4	535	532
Donnelly/Hawk-WT&S	70%	12	7	396	548

" LONDON OPENINGS "

Oct 23- Much Ado About Nothing-Old Vic
Oct 31- Good Woman of Settsan-Royal Court
Nov 14- Double Image-Savoy
Nov 15- Fanny- Drury Lane
Nov 2- Ten Minute Alibi-Westminster
Nov 6- New Tenant- Arts
Nov 8- Nude with Violin- Globe
Nov 8- Devil's Disciple

